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**IN THE CLAIMS:**

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for supporting virtual path/virtual channel (VP/VC) groups in asynchronous transfer mode (ATM) switching systems that implement ATM automatic protection switching (APS) in which traffic flows substantially continuously from a source on two paths and a destination selects traffic from only one of the paths at a time for further processing, the method including comprising:  
creating a groups table, the groups table having an entry for each of the two instances paths of every active VP/VC group's member set group, each active VP/VC group having an associated set of member circuits, each said entry indicating whether the cells for that instance path of the member circuits of that VP/VC group should be forwarded or discarded, each said entry referencing a corresponding entry in the groups table referenced by means of a pointer field; ~~the method including~~  
accessing a relevant entry in the groups table when a cell ~~for that circuit~~ arrives on one of the two paths, the relevant entry associated with the one of the two paths, the relevant entry including a status value;[.]] and  
discarding the cell if the accessed status value is "discard" indicative of a discard status and or forwarding the cell otherwise if the status value is not indicative of a status other than the discard status.
2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein forwarding the cell includes comprises:  
maintaining a lookup table containing including entries a lookup table entry for each circuit in the set of member circuits of each VP/VC group for forwarding cells[.]]:  
and  
forwarding the cell as specified in the specific lookup table entry for that circuit.
3. Cancelled
4. Cancelled

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5. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 2, wherein the a number of supported groups is determined in part by the a number of bits allocated to the groups-table pointer field in the lookup-table entry associated with the circuit for the cell.

6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein any value of the pointer field other than zero constitutes a valid index into the group groups table.

7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 6, wherein a value of zero in the pointer field of the ~~lookup-table entry~~ groups table indicates that the corresponding VC circuit or VP circuit is not a member of a group any of the VP/VC groups, and that ~~that VC circuit's or VP circuit's forward/discard status should be determined from the lookup table entry itself~~ a forward/discard status of the respective circuit is stored in a lookup table entry associated with the circuit.

8. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the groups table is implemented as part of a module of the switching system.

9. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein a number of supported VP/VC groups is determined in part by a size of the groups table.